

The Bible Critics Were Wrong

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Bible critics have been proven wrong a thousand times, and in most cases this hasn't humbled them or changed their opinion toward Scripture. This reminds us of what Abraham said in Luke 16:31.

“And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

Christian apologetics is a spiritual battle rather than an intellectual one.

Following are a few of the glaring errors that have been made by critics who have tried to disprove the Bible:

THE CRITICS WERE WRONG ABOUT ANCIENT WRITING.

In the 19th century it was believed by theological modernists that writing was not developed by Moses' day, thus he could not have written the Pentateuch.

“The time, of which the pre-Mosaic narrations treat, is a sufficient proof of their legendary character. It was a time prior to all knowledge of writing” (H. Schultz, *Old Testament Theology*, 1869).

“These wanderers [Moses and Israel] had no written language, they could neither read nor write” (Robert Ingersoll, *About the Holy Bible*, 1894).

Secular archaeologists now date writing to the middle of the 4th millennium BC, which is 1,500 years before Moses!

“Inscribed artifacts from excavations show that man had a knowledge of writing as early as the late 4th millennium BC” (Joseph Naveh, *Origins of the Alphabets*).

Ancient libraries have been unearthed at Ugarit, Mari, Ur, Ebla, Nippur, Nineveh, Persepolis, and many other places. Tens of thousands of documents dating to Abraham's age and earlier prove that the ancient civilizations described in Genesis were highly literate.

THE CRITICS WERE WRONG ABOUT GENESIS 10.

Genesis 10-11 describes the division of the nations by Noah's sons following the Flood, the establishment of city states, the building of the idolatrous Tower of Babel, and the confusion of the languages.

Skeptics have called this a “religious myth.”

“We only know that the books of the Pentateuch are filled with mistakes and contradictions. We also know that the account of the Tower of Babel is an ignorant and childish fable” (Robert Ingersoll, *About the Holy Bible*, 1894).

But the skeptics have been proven wrong.

Henry Rawlinson, who helped unlock the ancient cuneiform writing, said that Genesis 10 well deserves “to be called the most authentic record that we possess for the affiliation of nations” (*The Seven Great Monarchies of the Ancient World*, vol. 1).

There is evidence for the cities named in Genesis 10.

“He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah” (Genesis 10:9-11).

Of the seven cities named here, five are known to archaeologists and four have been excavated.

Accad (Akkad) was the headquarters for the Akkadian Empire founded by Sargon the Great in the 3rd millennium BC. This city gave its name to the Akkadian language that was the international trade language of ancient Mesopotamia for 2,000 years until the time of the Persian Empire.

There is also evidence for the civilization described in Genesis. Archaeology has demonstrated the following facts:

1. At this time and place technologically-advanced civilizations sprang up and spread across Mesopotamia.
2. Powerful city-states formed alliances.
3. These kingdoms were literate.
4. They were led by proud, deified rulers like Nimrod and Asshur.
5. They engaged in the art of war.
6. They engaged in idolatry and built idolatrous towers.
7. They were morally corrupt.

Consider Ebla, which dates to the time of Abraham and earlier.

20,000 clay tablets and fragments were found at Ebla.

It was a kingdom encompassing more than 250,000 people; the capital city had 30,000 people (*Ebla A New Look at History*).

The luxurious two-story palace occupied 28,000 square feet. It was enclosed by walls 40-50 feet high.

The kingdom of Ebla encompassed 16 governorships and carried on business estimated in billions of dollars in today's money.

Ebla traded in grain, cattle, timber, textiles, and exquisitely-made handicrafts. Her metal workers used fusion processes to create metal alloys.

Ebla grew enough barley in one year to feed millions of people, providing a large excess for export. She did business with 1,000 cities and towns in 80 kingdoms.

Ebla was a literate society. Her scribes were proficient in multiple languages and carried on international communication.

Ebla had as many as 12,000 men under arms at one time.

Ebla worshipped the goddess Ishtar and other gods and goddesses.

In 1955, influential archaeologist William Albright said, "The Table of Nations remains an astonishingly accurate document" (*Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands*, 1955, p. 72).

THE CRITICS WERE WRONG ABOUT GENESIS 14.

"And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations; That these made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela, which is Zoar" (Genesis 14:1-2).

Genesis 14 describes an alliance of four kings of Mesopotamia who attacked Sodom and Gomorrah and three other kings near the Dead Sea. The account indicates that the Mesopotamian kings traveled east of the Jordan River.

Skeptics said this didn't happen because there was no highway from Mesopotamia to the Dead Sea east of the Jordan.

William Albright believed this when he started his research in the 1920s, but he discovered that there was a major highway called "The King's Highway" that ran south to the Red Sea. He reported on this in *The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible*, 1933.

THE CRITICS WERE WRONG ABOUT ANCIENT LAW CODES.

19th century skeptics said that Israel could not have possessed a complex legal code because no such codes were known in those days.

The discovery of the Code of Hammurabi in 1901 destroyed this thinking. It was a complex law code written by Hammurabi, the king of Babylon, and it dates to about 200 years before Moses.

THE CRITICS WERE WRONG ABOUT UR.

In the 19th century, skeptics claimed that Ur, the birthplace of Abraham, was a myth.

Yet in 1922, the city of Ur was located by Leonard Woolley and excavated over the next 12 years. A treasure trove of artifacts were unearthed, that date to before the time of Abraham. It proves that Ur was a sophisticated, literate, idolatrous city with far-flung commercial enterprises. The “Ur Room” at the British Museum is filled with artifacts from ancient Ur. The city’s chief god was the moon god, and its temple was an idolatrous tower like the Tower of Babel. Joshua 24:2 says Abraham’s father worshipped idols.

THE CRITICS WERE WRONG IN COMPARING NOAH’S FLOOD ACCOUNT WITH PAGAN ACCOUNTS.

The Gilgamesh Epic was discovered in the ancient city of Nineveh by Henry Layard and translated in 1872 by the British Museum. It dates to about 1800 BC, which is near the time of Abraham.

It purports to be the account that Utnapistim told Gilgamesh of how he survived the flood and gained immortality.

Skeptics used the Gilgamesh Epic as evidence that the biblical flood account is merely one among many ancient legends.

But there are three ways that the Gilgamesh Epic shows its ridiculous mythical character in contrast with the Bible.

1. Consider the Gilgamesh gods.

They are spiteful, immoral, selfish, petty, competitive, fickle, impatient, weak, cowardly, and deceitful. The chief god Ea instructs Utnapistim to lie to his fellow man by giving the impression that the gods are going to bless them instead of destroying them. When the storm comes, the gods are so frightened that they cower like dogs, and Ishtar shrieks like a woman in childbirth. After the flood, the god Enlil is furious because some of the men escaped.

In contrast, the God of Scripture is almighty, all-wise, holy, just, compassionate, merciful, longsuffering, and perfectly trustworthy. He speaks only truth, and His promises are irrevocable. He is man’s lawgiver and judge, but He is also man’s Saviour. God is longsuffering with mankind. Noah preached repentance for 120 years before the Flood (1 Pet. 3:19; 2 Pet. 2:5).

2. Consider the description of the flood hydraulics.

In the Gilgamesh Epic the “rains poured down; the storm raged” for a mere six days. But this has happened many times in history without flooding the earth with water.

In contrast, the Bible describes the actual conditions as follows:

“In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights” (Genesis 7:11-12).

The water came down from the sky in a deluge that lasted 40 days and nights, but the water also came up from beneath the ground through the opening of great fountains of the deep.

3. Consider the ark of the Gilgamesh Epic.

It is a 200-foot CUBE with seven stories, which would have been incredibly unstable even on a calm sea, let alone a raging sea like that which would have resulted from the previously described deluge!

In contrast, Noah’s ark was perfectly proportioned for sea travel. It was 450 feet long by 75 feet wide and 30 feet high. This is similar in proportion to modern oil tankers and cargo containers.

THE CRITICS WERE WRONG ABOUT DAVID.

Modernists long called the Bible’s account of King David a myth because there was no extra-biblical record of him.

In 1993 and 1994, two discoveries provided evidence to disprove the skeptics.

The words “the house of David” were found on the Moabite Stone. This stone was found in 1868, but it had been broken into pieces and the inscription was not read until 1993. It is called the Moabite Stone because it was erected by Mesha, a Moabite king mentioned in 2 Kings 3:4.

In 1993, part of a victory pillar was found at the ancient city of Dan. It is inscribed with the words “Beit David” (“house of David”). The Tel Dan Inscription, as it is called, is on a pillar that was erected by the king of Syria to celebrate the defeat of his enemies and dates to the 9th century BC, only 100 years after David.

In 1995, *Time* magazine reported, “The skeptics’ claim that King David never existed is now hard to defend” (“Is the Bible Fact or Fiction?” *Time*, Dec. 18, 1995).

THE CRITICS WERE WRONG ABOUT SHEBA.

The Bible says that the Queen of Sheba visited King Solomon and brought a great camel train of riches, including gold and spices.

“And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions. And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart” (1 Kings 10:1-2).

Sheba and the land of spices was long thought to be mythical by Bible critics.

Now the existence of the ancient kingdom is acknowledged, and its capital city of Marib has been excavated. Wendell Phillips led the first expedition in the 1950s. He said, “There is no reason to doubt that the Queen was real” (*Qataban and Sheba*).

Expeditions have continued. In September 2000 the University of Calgary announced at its web site: “Arabian Desert Surrenders Queen of Sheba Secrets.”

Sheba was located in the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula.

THE CRITICS WERE WRONG ABOUT BERODACH-BALADAN.

In the 19th century, skeptics doubted the existence of Berodach-Baladan (also Merodach), the king of Babylon mentioned in 2 Kings.

“At that time Berodachbaladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick” (2 Kings 20:12).

Archaeology has confirmed Berodach-Baladan’s existence. Among other things, he is mentioned in the Sennacherib Prism, which is located in the British Museum. Here Sennacherib describes his defeat of Merodach:

“In my first campaign I accomplished the defeat of Berodach-Baladan, king of Babylonia, together with the army of Elam, his ally, in the plain of Kish.”

THE CRITICS WERE WRONG ABOUT CYRUS.

“Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah” (Ezra 1:2).

It was once thought by critics that the Bible’s record of Cyrus’ release of the Jews and his granting of religious liberty (Ezra 1:2) was mythical, since it was contrary to the known policy of kings in those times.

The Cyrus Cylinder, found in 1879, silenced this criticism. It proves that Cyrus had the policy of restoring captives to their lands and assisting them in rebuilding their temples.

THE CRITICS WERE WRONG ABOUT BELSHAZZAR.

“But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him” (Daniel 5:20).

In the 19th century, critics claimed that Belshazzar was a myth and that Nabonidus rather than Belshazzar was king of Babylon when it fell to the Medo-Persians.

In 1854, the Nabonidus Cylinder was discovered which is an account of King Nabonidus in which he plainly states that Belshazzar was his son. Belshazzar was co-ruler with Nabonidus, who had traveled to another land and left Belshazzar in charge of Babylon when it fell. This is why Belshazzar offered to make Daniel the THIRD ruler of the kingdom.

“Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom” (Daniel 5:29).

THE CRITICS WERE WRONG ABOUT THE BOOK OF ACTS.

In the 19th century, critics attacked Luke’s book of Acts as a historically unreliable document that wasn’t written until generations after Christ. German critic F.C. Baur claimed that the book was not written until the end of the 2nd century.

The liberal view was debunked by archaeologist William Ramsay, among others. As a student at the University of Aberdeen and Oxford, Ramsay was taught the liberal view and believed it. When he began to make expeditions to Asia Minor and Palestine, he intended to prove that the Bible is “not the book from heaven it claimed to be.” But instead, he proved that the book of Acts is historically accurate and was written during the first century.

“He regarded the weakest spot in the whole New Testament to be the story of Paul’s travels. These had never been thoroughly investigated by one on the spot. Equipped as no other man had been, he went to the home of the Bible. Here he spent fifteen years digging. Then in 1896 he published a large volume, *Saint Paul, the Traveler and the Roman Citizen*. ... The book caused a furor of dismay among the skeptics of the world. Its attitude was utterly unexpected because it was contrary to the announced intention of the author years before. For twenty years more, book after book from the same author came from the press, each filled with additional evidence of the exact, minute truthfulness of the whole New Testament as tested by the spade on the spot. And these books have stood the test of time, not one having been refuted, nor have I found even any attempt to refute them” (Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, p. 62).

Ramsay testified:

“Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy, he is possessed of the true historic sense ... In short this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians” (*The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, 1915).

“The present writer takes the view that Luke’s history is unsurpassed in respect of its trustworthiness. At this point we are describing what reasons and arguments changed the mind of one who began under the impression that the history was written long after the events and that it was untrustworthy as a whole” (Ibid.).

“We can say emphatically that there is no longer any solid basis for dating any book of the New Testament after about AD 80” (*Recent discoveries in Bible Lands*, 1955).

Following are examples of how the New Testament has been authenticated and the skeptics proven wrong:

The critics said Luke was wrong in Acts 14:6 when he wrote that Lystra and Derbe were located in Lycaonia and that Iconium was not in Lycaonia. Paul and Barnabas were in Iconium when they fled to Lystra and Derbe, which was said to be in Lycaonia, thus implying that Iconium was *not* in Lycaonia. In 1910, Ramsay unearthed a monument proving that Iconium was a Phrygian city rather than a Lycaonian city (*The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, p. 64).

The critics said that Luke was wrong about the census described Luke 2:1-3. They claimed that Quirinius (Cyrenius) was not governor of Syria at that time, because Josephus placed him as governor in 6 A.D., which was several years later. Archaeology disproved these charges. Ramsay unearthed an inscription in Antioch that stated that Quirinius was the governor of Syria in about 7 B.C. (*The New Evidence*, p. 63). Thus, Quirinius was governor of Syria for two terms, in 7 B.C. when Christ was born, and again in 6 A.D.

The critics further claimed that everyone did not have to return to his ancestral home for the census, contrary to what the Bible says. But a papyrus document found in Egypt says that all residents *were* required to travel to their ancestral homes (*The New Evidence*, p. 63).

Critics said that Luke was wrong when he said in Luke 3:1 that Lysanias was the tetrarch of Abilene in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, which was A.D. 27. Ancient historians had stated that Lysanias was killed in 36 B.C. But an inscription found at Abila near Damascus dating to between A.D. 14 and 29 says that Lysanias was the tetrarch" (*The New Evidence*, p. 64). Thus, Luke was right.

Critics said that Luke was wrong in using the Greek term *politarchs* (translated "rulers of the city" in Acts 17:6) to denote the civil authorities of Thessalonica because the term is not found in classical literature. Archaeology has since uncovered 19 inscriptions that use the title after the same fashion as Luke (*The New Evidence*, p. 65). The British Museum displays one of these inscriptions from an arch in Thessalonica (Room 78, GR 1877.5-11.1).

In these and other cases the critics were wrong, and Luke was right. Skeptics have repeatedly and ridiculously acted as if they have an omniscient knowledge of ancient history and thus are in a position to criticize the Bible, but they have been proven wrong countless times. The fact that this has not humbled most of them is further evidence of the Bible's divine inspiration, because it prophesied their willful ignorance (2 Peter 3:3-5).

In 1963, classical historian A.N. Sherwin-White confirmed Ramsay's view of Acts:

"Any attempt to reject its basic historicity even in matters of detail must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted" (*Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, p. 189).

THE CRITICS WERE WRONG ABOUT THE LATE DATING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

F.C. Baur, father of the Tubingen School of theological liberalism in Germany, taught that the New Testament was not written until a century or more after the apostles by unknown men who used the names of the apostles. He proposed that the Gospel of John was not written until 170 AD. Baur's theory influenced many.

But this has been disproven by the discovery of New Testament manuscripts dating to the end of the first century and by the existence of hundreds of quotations from the New Testament books in the writings of Christian leaders dating to the late first and early second century. (See the report "The Bible Critics Were Wrong" at www.wayoflife.org.)

William Ramsay debunked the idea that the New Testament was written long after the events.

"We can already say emphatically that there is no longer any solid basis for dating any book of the New Testament after about A.D. 80, two full generations before the date between 130 and 150 given by the more radical New Testament critics of today" (*Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands*, 1955, p. 136).

"In my opinion, every book of the New Testament was written by a baptized Jew between the forties and the eighties of the first century A.D." (*Christianity Today*, Jan. 18, 1963).

CONCLUSION

These are only a few examples of how that Bible critics have been proven wrong by their own archaeology. We could give hundreds of other examples.

Skeptics have acted as if they have an omniscient knowledge of ancient history and can thus criticize the Bible, but they have been proven wrong repeatedly. The fact that this has not humbled most of them is further evidence for the divine inspiration of the Bible, because it prophesied the willful ignorance of scoffers 2,000 years ago.

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. *Seeing then that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the

coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" (2 Peter 3:3-12).

The first part of this prophecy is being fulfilled in our day. The world is filled with scoffers who reject the divine and the supernatural. They reject the Bible's doctrine of Creation and the global Flood.

God warns us not to follow in their footsteps. It warns that Christ is coming, and He will judge the world's sin and rebellion, and He will establish a new heaven and a new earth where sin will no longer be allowed to dwell.

As for me, I believe the Bible, but forty years ago, I did not believe it. As a 23-year-old young man, I had left church and rejected the Bible. After a year and a half in Vietnam in the U.S. Army, I became a "hippie" and a drifter, hitchhiking all the way across America twice. I didn't believe the Bible's warnings about eternal judgment, nor did I believe its gospel that Jesus is the Son of God who died for man's sin and rose from the dead. I joined a Hindu meditation organization called The Self-Realization Fellowship Society and traveled from the east coast to California to visit the headquarters near Los Angeles. In the summer of 1973, God had mercy on me and I met a Christian man who knew his Bible well and who confronted me with the claims of Jesus Christ. We traveled together for about four days, and I challenged him with my skeptical, New Age doctrines. I was pretty arrogant and somewhat obnoxious at times, but he didn't respond in kind. He patiently and kindly answered every question and every challenge. He simply showed me what the Bible said about life and death. At the end of those four days, I opened my heart to Christ and surrendered to Him as Lord and Saviour. I did this in a motel room in Daytona Beach, Florida, and my life was radically and permanently changed. I have never regretted that decision.

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